

Crisis Education Project Profile

March 2005

Project: Community Organized Primary Education

Locations: Afghanistan (310 Community Schools):
Khost, Gardez, Logar, Kabul, Maidan, Ghazni and
Paktika provinces

Implementing Organization: CARE International in Afghanistan

Type of Programming: Community schools with links to formal school system

Target group/beneficiaries: Teachers, students, community members (Village Education Committees)

Stage: Crisis (areas of instability due to conflict) and transitional (post-conflict)

Environmental Context of the Program

SOCIAL: A 2002 UNICEF survey indicates there are 4,593 ‘learning spaces’ available with 1.7 million children in attendance and being taught by a teaching force of 53,885 teachers. Approximately 60% of the schools are considered “shelterless”, with classes conducted in borrowed or destroyed facilities. Approx. 1/3 of the schools has no identifiable water source, and less than 15% have toilets for children’s use. Education statistics are dated and unreliable. Official literacy rates are currently at 46 percent for men and 16 percent for women, although it is estimated that in remote villages illiteracy rates reach almost 100 percent.

CULTURAL/RELIGION: Approximately 23 million people live in the country—more than 1.3 million are internally displaced. The population is 99% Muslim (Sunni Muslim: 84 percent and Shi’a Muslim: 15 percent) with 1% other religions. Dominant languages include Pushtu (national language), Persian (Dari), and Turkic are also spoken.

ECONOMIC: Afghanistan is an extremely poor, landlocked country, highly dependent on farming and livestock raising (sheep and goats). An already poor economy has been further diminished by political and military upheavals during two decades of war, including the nearly 10-year Soviet military occupation and recent campaign against terrorism. The area is slightly smaller than Texas (647,500 sq km) with an arid to semi-arid climate (cold winters and hot summers). The terrain is mostly rugged mountains; plains in north and southwest. Natural resources include natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semiprecious stones.

Political Relationships: A Grand Council, or Loya Jirga overwhelmingly elected Hamid Karzai, a unifying figure during his interim tenure at the head Afghan administration, head of state Thursday June 13 2002. Karzai had served six months as interim prime minister of the U.N.-organized government that took power after the fundamentalist Taliban regime was driven from power in December. The Emergency Loya Jirga Representatives (total of 2,000 delegates) included: 1,051 elected members; guaranteed

seats for 160 women; 53 seats for current government; 100 seats for Afghan refugees and six for internally displaced Afghans; 25 seats for nomads.

Program Description

TARGET GROUP: Children between the ages of 6-14 years, with a special focus on girls. The VECs¹ and parents, with the help of project Teacher Trainers and Community Mobilizers, registered school-age students with a quota of at least one-third (38%) girls.

MATERIAL/PHYSICAL RESOURCES: The VECs and parents provide the school facility and hired teachers. Classes usually met in a 'Hujra' (living room), in a parent's house, Mosque, tent, or in the open air under a tree. Books include student textbooks, student workbooks and teachers' guides. Stationary included pens, pencils, notebooks, sharpeners, erasers, slates, sleety, geometry boxes, etc. School equipment includes plastic mats, blackboards, chalk, duster, maps, desks and chairs for teachers and tents where needed. Students in upper grades receive supplementary reading materials, which include BBC publications, such as pamphlets on peace concepts and health education.

FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES: Parents, VEC members and schoolteachers negotiate the school fee per child to pay teachers' salary. Village Education Committees together with teachers, select students from poorer families to be exempted from payment to ensure equity of access for students from poorer families. A key component for the development of institutional capacity to maintain and support the schools is the extensive training VEC members receive in community-based participatory methodologies (Participatory Rural Appraisals), resource mobilization, school administration, and supervision of school personnel, decision-making, and conflict resolution. COPE Community mobilizers provide ongoing support to ensure skills are build in a consistent and comprehensive manner.

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION:

1. Introductory State (months 1-2): community meetings held, each school to have signed agreements between CARE and community, teachers attend initial teacher training course, compensation for teacher is agreed upon, minimum of 30 children enrolled per class, and inputs such as textbooks, tents provided.
2. School Support Stage (throughout years 1-2): regular monitoring of teacher's and students' attendance by VECs, teachers regularly paid by community, parents awareness session on girls' education, VEC training session in school management and dispute resolution, VEC meetings, and bi-monthly visits from Community Mobilizers.
3. Phase-out of NGO (CARE) to Local Authorities (last six months of year 2): teacher trainers visit school once a month and Community Mobilizers visit each VEC once a month.

CURRICULUM: To improve the teaching and learning environment, the program has developed a series (5) of pre-service and in-service teacher training modules, which focus on child-centered instructional approaches, effective classroom management, relevant teaching and learning material development, and multi-grade teaching techniques.

EVALUATION: Links with the formal education system need to be established in order to avoid the development of a parallel system. COPE is envisaged as an interim solution to the lack of access to education in the target areas. Currently, the Education Department validates completion of grade certificates and the appointment of community selected teachers.

¹ VECs are Village Education Committees (similar to Parent Teachers Associations)

Programming Interventions: Impact and Effectiveness

ACCESS: To increase access to basic education the project focuses on building the institutional capacity of communities to self-manage their schools. A community analysis process is undertaken during the initial stages of project implementation to assist communities in identifying key issues and finding solutions on how to address them. Community mobilizers help create Village Education Committees (VECs) to take on the management and financial responsibilities of the schools to ensure full community-ownership. The responsibilities of the VECs include: selection and supervision of teachers, monitoring the quality of teaching and learning taking place in the classroom, maintaining school infrastructure, and enhancing community-school relationships.

MANAGEMENT: COPE has put a strong emphasis on building the capacity of the VEC members to develop locally appropriate solutions to address barriers that impede girls' education, and to take responsibility for the management and financing of the schools. As a result, communities control the mechanisms that determine who teaches girls and boys and where, thus ensuring that girls can be educated without compromising local traditions and also making it possible for women to teach.

QUALITY: When communities are empowered to take control of the education of their children they exercise their right to self-reliance and can find solutions to their problems. In Afghanistan, despite restrictions placed on girl's education (by the former Taliban authorities), the COPE project approach allowed communities to take control of who teaches their girls and boys and where they are taught. Communities resisted Taliban efforts to close schools when they were still in power. COPE's approach supports the communities' strong sense of ownership of these schools and their awareness of the rights of their children to education.

At its base is community empowerment and capacity that enables communities to manage their school affairs effectively during CARE partnership and fosters cultural acceptance and ongoing school development after CARE staff withdrawal. Any intervention that improves access to quality education must be drafted in the light of the current operating environment, local attitudes, knowledge and beliefs. The Taliban had accepted or tolerated programs like CARE's COPE partly because the project approach builds on the traditional education system where instruction takes place in Mosques or private houses, and teachers are hired from local communities. Curriculum includes secular subjects such as languages, math, social science and sciences in addition to religious subjects making this approach acceptable to local religious and community leaders.

Only a small number of teachers who were selected by the communities were already trained as teachers; most of them were hired locally within their communities. Their educational qualifications might be minimal, i.e. completion of primary school. Considerable investment in teacher training was required both to improve teachers' grasp of subject content and to introduce them to instructional methodology used in the project schools. Five different training modules e.g. pre-service, in-service, grade up, material development, and refresher were given to schoolteachers. Training on multi-grade teaching as planned was not conducted separately, however its related topics were integrated in the other training modules conducted by the project. Training on science topics was designed and delivered by the project Senior Teacher Trainers for the project Teacher Trainers.

EQUIP1: Building Educational Quality through Classrooms, Schools, and

Communities is a multi-faceted program designed to raise the quality of classroom teaching and the level of student learning by effecting school-level changes. EQUIP1 serves all levels of education, from early childhood development for school readiness, to primary and secondary education, adult basic education, pre-vocational training, and the provision of life-skills. Activities range from teacher support in course content and instructional practices, to principal support for teacher performance, and community involvement for improving school management and infrastructure. EQUIP1 works with food for education issues and contributes to the provision of education and training in crisis and post-crisis environments.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is the lead organization responsible for implementing EQUIP1 and is joined by fourteen outstanding partners: Academy for Educational Development, Aga Khan Foundation USA, CARE, Discovery Channel Global Education Fund, Education Development Center, Howard University, International Reading Association, The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, Juárez & Associates, Inc., Michigan State University, Save the Children, Inc., Sesame Workshop, University of Pittsburgh, and World Education, Inc..

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